

# The Greenery's Guide to Water Wise Gardening

## Step #3– Lawn Care

MOST LAWNS IN THE CENTRAL VALLEY receive twice as much water as required for a healthy appearance. The key to watering lawns is to irrigate infrequently, yet thoroughly. For example, let's say you water every day for 15 minutes, try watering every other day for twenty five minutes instead. This creates a deep, well rooted lawn that efficiently uses water stored in the soil. Or, you may consider watering every third or fourth day for longer periods of time.

Since soil types can vary greatly from one yard to another, it is difficult to determine how long the sprinklers should run. If the lawn begins to wilt and has a grayish appearance, the run time should be increased. If the top 1" of soil feels moist to the touch the evening before the sprinklers go on again, then the run time should be lowered. By setting the sprinkler run time between these two extremes you will find the appropriate watering time. Please remember that timers need to be adjusted as season temperatures change. If sprinklers come on at night, check periodically for needed repairs.

### HERE ARE A FEW WATERWISE LAWN CARE TIPS:

- Follow your community's recommended or regulated watering days. (Turlock's are Tues., Thurs. and Sat. for addresses ending with an even number and Wed., Fri. and Sun. for addresses ending with an odd number. No Monday watering!)
- Set the watering schedule between midnight and noon. Never water in the afternoon or evening!
- With sloped lawns, you may need to lower the watering time and repeat the cycle the same morning to allow better water penetration and avoid costly run-off.
- Remove thatch and aerate lawn to encourage movement of water to the root zone.
- Raise your lawn mowers cutting height – longer blades retain more water.
- Allow the lawn blades to grow  $\frac{3}{4}$  to one inch before the next mowing.
- Minimize summer lawn fertilizing, which promotes new growth needing additional watering, or use "Dr. Iron" which greens up the grass with little to no growth.

If planning to lay a new sod, The Greenery recommends using a drought tolerant fescue, such as Bolero. When seeding a lawn, you can use a fescue or Bermuda, which is very drought tolerant. Just remember, Bermuda is a warm season grass, which means it turns brown during the winter months. Never plant the Bermuda seed after early September. Consider minimizing the planned lawn area to reduce water usage. Planting some drought tolerant plants in the unused area would be an excellent alternative.

In the event of a drought or when water restrictions are imposed, eliminate or greatly reduce your lawn's watering schedule. Although lawns are a beautiful addition to our landscapes, they consume far more water than trees and shrubs and they are less costly to replace. You may be surprised how rapidly the lawn might recover once restrictions are removed!

***The staff at The Greenery is your resource for WaterWise concerns. It's our pleasure to help you with these transitions.***